



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 7, 2012
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Daniel Esty
Presented By Susan Frechette

Raised House Bill No. 5258 – AN ACT PERMITTING THE POSSESSION OF REINDEER YEAR ROUND

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised House Bill No. 5258, AN ACT PERMITTING THE POSSESSION OF REINDEER YEAR ROUND.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has concerns about this bill and its potential impact on Connecticut's white-tailed deer and moose populations through the introduction of diseases that do not currently exist in the state. Our concern is that the proposed bill may exacerbate the already existing risk by increasing the frequency and number of animals transported into Connecticut from out-of-state sources.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is one of a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE's), which include Mad Cow disease in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. No treatment or vaccination exists and if contracted the disease is always fatal. Once established, CWD is extremely costly and difficult to contain, and nearly impossible to eradicate.

CWD is currently known to inflict white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk and moose. Reindeer (also known as caribou) is the only other deer species native to North America. Although CWD has not yet been identified in this species, genetic studies have revealed that there is no known scientific reason to believe they are not susceptible to contracting and transmitting the disease.

CWD continues to spread. Prior to 2000, CWD was found in only a few Midwestern states and the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan. As of 2012, CWD has been found in 18 states (Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming), two Canadian provinces (Alberta and Saskatchewan), and three countries (United State, Canada and Korea).

Although no relationship has been documented between CWD and humans to date, the presence of the disease reduces the appeal of infected deer to hunters. Such perceptions are likely to result in lower hunter demand and reduced deer harvests in areas most in need of population control. This outcome

could aggravate public health threats associated with Lyme disease, Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis, vehicle-deer collisions, property damage, and ecological degradation associated with burgeoning white-tailed deer populations.

The Agency believes that it is the intent of Raised House Bill 5258 to eliminate the annual transport of reindeer into and out of Connecticut as allowed under the current statute (26-57a). Annual import/export would be eliminated by establishing an in-state domestic herd of animals that have been tested and found free of disease. However, as currently written the proposed bill does not place any limitations on the frequency and number of animals imported or exported. To address this concern the Agency recommends that the following language be added to the proposed bill.

Reindeer imported into the State of Connecticut under the provisions of this section must remain in the state and may not be exported.

In summary, DEEP is concerned that this proposal, as written, increases the risk that CWD may be spread to Connecticut. The additional text we have provided will address this concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact DEEP's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance at 424-3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov